

ENHANCED DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT



PROCESS EVALUATION PHASE ONE 2008

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AND

ALAMEDA

CONTRA COSTA

LOS ANGELES

SAN DIEGO

SANTA CRUZ

PROBATION DEPARTMENTS



PROCESS EVALUATION:
ENHANCED DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Phase I: January 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006, the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA), California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, awarded grants under the Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Project (DMC-TAP) to Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, San Diego and Santa Cruz Counties. This project is a major component of California's response to the federal Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act mandate to reduce disproportionality in juvenile justice systems statewide. Mark Morris Associates, with Joanne M. Brown, was retained to conduct a process evaluation of the counties' efforts.

The CSA DMC-TAP was conceptualized as leading to the development and implementation of a plan that would not only reduce disproportionality in these counties but would serve as a model for other jurisdictions by emphasizing replicability and lessons learned. The focus of the first grant year, Phase I, was strengthening the infrastructure of the local juvenile justice system through "capacity building." A specific strategy for capacity building was not mandated; however, activities such as staff and stakeholder training, public outreach, and targeted data collection and analysis were included in each county's grant application.

Although the five counties participating in the DMC-TAP project are diverse in terms of history, geography and demographics, important lessons in terms of replicability were identified during the Phase I process evaluation:

(1) Structuring DMC-TAP as a three year demonstration has reinforced the OJJDP DMC mission by acknowledging that developing a meaningful strategy for eliminating disproportionality is complex and requires methodical work within probation and real collaboration with stakeholders in justice agencies and in the community. Requiring structured quarterly progress reports from each has allowed DMC-TAP staff at CSA to monitor activities at each site and provide timely technical assistance directly to the projects.

(2) Participants believe that prior history with initiatives around disproportionality made a definite difference in the progress during Phase I in several ways. Prior experience enabled counties to utilize the funding from DMC-TAP to build on

previous training provided staff, assessments of policies and procedures, and information systems which were capable of collecting data by race and ethnicity. These preparations supported a comfort level with the issue, which reduced or eliminated the need to prove the case of disparity and disproportionality in their local juvenile justice systems.

(3) To influence the infrastructure of Probation Departments requires leadership from the top and by staff person(s) with high visibility inside the Probation Department who have sufficient authority and time to lead the project.

(4) Sound data is essential to obtaining consensus about the extent and dimensions of disproportionality and clarity of objectives and timetables. Incompatible or limited data systems which do not collect information relevant to disproportionality are detriments to capacity building and planning.

(5) Contracting with outside consultants with significant expertise with the issue of disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system strengthens capacity building. National leadership on this important issue has produced protocols, best practice models, and significant "real life" project experience. DMC participants reported that the guidance from consultants who have worked successfully in other jurisdictions not only escalated their progress by providing focus, but also added important legitimacy to the overall initiative.

The three year DMC-TAP format of capacity building, followed by planning with stakeholders, and then implementation has provided the five projects with both the necessary initial focus and a realistic road map for the collaborations and changes which will likely come in the following years. During Phase I, the five county DMC-TAP projects have strategically and diligently focused on increasing the capacity of their juvenile justice systems to reduce disproportionate minority contact. All of the projects report that through Phase I efforts, DMC within their juvenile justice system has received serious attention among County leadership inside and outside of the juvenile justice system

Introduction

In 2006, the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA), California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, awarded grants under the Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Project (DMC-TAP) to Alameda, Contra Costa, Los Angeles, San Diego and Santa Cruz Counties. This project is a major component of California's response to the federal Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act mandate to reduce disproportionality in the juvenile justice system. The counties were asked to identify and assess DMC in their juvenile justice systems and then develop and implement a plan that reduces the overrepresentation of minority youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice systems relative to their numbers in the general population.

The DMC-TAP was conceptualized and funded by CSA into three one-year phases. The focus of Phase I (Year I) was designated as strengthening the infrastructure of the juvenile justice system through "capacity building". A specific strategy was not mandated; however, activities such as staff and stakeholder training, public outreach, and targeted data collection and analysis were included in each county's grant application.

Mark Morris Associates, with Joanne M. Brown, was retained to conduct a process evaluation of the counties' efforts. The focus of this process evaluation is to describe and analyze the experience of each of these projects during Year I by focusing on replicability. The five counties participating in this project are diverse in terms of history, geography and demographics, and their approaches to DMC are also diverse in many respects. This report will describe how each DMC-TAP project approached critical decisions.

We begin by examining how each project designed a strategy to increase the capacity of the county juvenile justice system to undertake meaningful steps to reduce disproportionality. The projects adopted significantly different strategies and structural models, based on differences in county size, juvenile justice culture and organization, and prior work related to disproportionality. The attached matrix summarizes discrete elements which correspond to policy and operational decisions. These decision points should be helpful to those interested in reducing disproportionality or disproportionate minority contact in their own juvenile justice systems and determining which model is most applicable.

Organizational Issues

1. Foundations

We began our evaluation by asking the question: What motivated each county to apply for the DMC-TAP grant and what was in place in each county that might have supported a strong start for the project?

Two counties, Alameda and Contra Costa, had the benefit of receiving a technical assistance grant from CSA in 2005, for pilot projects to explore the dimensions of disproportionality in their counties. In Alameda County, the East Bay Community Foundation, a nonprofit organization, which had been centrally involved in the 2005 DMC pilot project, joined the Probation Department in writing the DMC-TAP grant application and gathering the support of county policy makers and law enforcement. Contra Costa County's DMC-TAP application also built on the work of an advisory group convened for the pilot project. The Coordinator for DMC-TAP had staffed the earlier technical assistance pilot project.

The Santa Cruz County Probation Department had a decade of related internal work in conjunction with the Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and a firmly established leadership role in the County which supported the Department in undertaking challenging initiatives.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department and the San Diego County Probation Department came to the DMC initiative as a result of the public commitment by County leadership. In San Diego County in 2000, a DMC subcommittee was established by the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council. The committee contracted with the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to conduct identification and assessment studies on disproportionality at justice decision points. (The committee and the studies were funded by a combination of private and public entities, including law enforcement.) This collaboration produced data about significant DMC patterns and led to the application for the DMC-TAP grant.

2. Use of independent/outside consultants

The San Diego County Probation Department applied for the DMC-TAP grant with the assistance of the Children's Initiative and designated the Children's Initiative as the consultant for their project. The nonprofit Children's Initiative was chosen by the County because of its recognized position as an advocate for children in the County and its collaboration with County leadership and departments in previous broad social initiatives. Partnering with the Children's Initiative and hiring it as the consultant for the DMC project served the dual functions of

enhancing the legitimacy of the project and working with a partner that had established itself as a recognized liaison between the community, county government and the political arena. This was a time saving decision which allowed the Probation Department to engage as a client rather than having to directly allocate resources to the design, development and implementation of the project.

The other DMC-TAP counties hired outside consultants with substantial prior expertise in DMC Initiatives. The nationally recognized non-profit Burns Institute was employed by Los Angeles County and Santa Cruz County. Alameda County contracted with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD); a private consultant and senior research fellow from the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice, formerly employed with NCCD, was hired by Contra Costa County. Both of the lead consultants in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties had participated in the 2005 pilot project, affording DMC-TAP the benefit of continuity of relationship.

3. Project Coordinator

With the exception of San Diego and Contra Costa Counties, the other counties identified a current employee of the Probation Department as the project coordinator. The San Diego County Probation Department contracted with the non-profit Children's Initiative and its CEO was designated as the project coordinator. Contra Costa County contracted with the newly retired Deputy Probation Chief, who had managed the DMC pilot project.

In the other counties, the DMC-TAP project coordinators' responsibilities were added to the existing duties of incumbent administrators in the Probation Department. Los Angeles County delegated project coordination duties to a Department Consultant who manages a wide range of special projects and is assigned to the Juvenile Field Services Bureau Chief. Alameda and Santa Cruz made similar decisions regarding the coordinator position. Each of these DMC-TAP coordinators is an experienced probation career professional with significant tenure in the Department and a career history of leading or coordinating inter and intra-agency projects. All of the coordinators are well known in their counties' criminal justice systems and have experience working with project evaluations and grant reporting requirements.

Santa Cruz County made the important decision to provide support staff for the coordinator. Due to the line operational duties of the DMC-TAP coordinator in Santa Cruz County, the Probation Department contracted with a local Casey Family Services consultant who had worked with the Department on the Juvenile

Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), to staff the project and the committee work.

4. Leadership and project visibility

The visibility and reputation of any new project depends on its location within the organizational structure and the support it receives from “the top.”

Organizational location is generally recognized as an express statement of the importance of that project to the leadership. During Phase I, the visibility of DMC-TAP occurred in varying ways among the counties. Notably, Probation Chiefs in Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Cruz Counties took strong public positions on the importance of DMC-TAP and the goal of reducing disproportionality was integrated into each department’s strategic planning.

The Alameda County Probation Chief advanced the visibility of DMC-TAP by raising the issue of the juvenile justice system’s response to disproportionality in other forums and introduced DMC-TAP with an email to all employees stating his opinion that disproportionality existed in the juvenile justice system, expressing his support for the project, and notifying employees that all employees would be trained about the initiative and the relevance of their roles to reducing disproportionate minority contact.

The Contra Costa County Probation Chief has been a vocal advocate for a county wide assessment of how disproportionality is manifested in the juvenile justice system and has directed that consideration of disproportionality be included in all projects and contracts with community based organizations.

In 1998, the Santa Cruz County Probation Chief introduced the issue of disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system to the Probation Department through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) project. The Chief actively leads the DMC initiative by chairing the policy committee and participating in all quarterly meetings of both the policy committee and working committees.

The San Diego Probation Department partnered with the Children’s Initiative to continue the data driven analysis of disproportionality in their juvenile justice system and to build on the collaboration that had funded the preliminary research. During Phase I, the Department gave the SANDAG consultants full access to its data and directed Department employees to cooperate in the collection and analysis of the data.

The Los Angeles County Probation Chief assigned a Bureau Chief to lead the project. The Bureau Chief was appointed chairperson of the DMC subcommittee

of the County Criminal Justice Coordination Committee (CCJCC), and was assisted by the Bureau Consultant, who was responsible for the operational coordination of the project.

5. Advisory groups and work groups

Contra Costa County utilizes a “decision making workgroup,” which is a continuation of the pilot DMC project, to provide guidance to the project and outreach to stakeholders. The work group meets as needed, and is chaired by the District Attorney. Membership includes representatives from the County Administrator’s Office and the Board of Supervisors, along with department heads of the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender, the Probation Department, the Courts, the Sheriff’s Office, Health Services, Employment and Human Services, Richmond Police Department, Concord Police Department, and the County Office of Education.

The Contra Costa County Probation Department organized Phase I as an extension of the strategy established during the 2005 DMC pilot project. The Department reconvened the decision makers workgroup to gather and assess data on the minority representation in their juvenile justice system. The initial DMC assessment presented data that was generally accepted showing disproportionality among African American youth and significant differences in three areas of the County. The committee reached the consensus that disproportionality was a community and resource issue and therefore that the emphasis should be on more services to youth and their families and on diversion programs. This approach was also presented as likely to produce more immediate and measurable positive results. The resulting strategy combines community and stakeholder mobilization and education, shared assessment and stakeholder training, interagency partnership and planning, and oversight by the interagency workgroup. The DMC Coordinator regularly meets with the Probation Department management team to provide updates on the project. The management team has committed to implementing programs and making necessary policy and procedure changes as the broader strategy evolves.

The Los Angeles project uses the DMC subcommittee appointed by the Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee as its advisory group. The status of the CCJCC in Los Angeles County government elevates the visibility of the work of the DMC subcommittee and reinforces participation by chiefs of police, the judiciary and the leadership of juvenile justice system agencies. The Probation Department administration decided to take the lead on the subcommittee and to begin with the Probation Department itself. This focus plus the commitment to a data driven analysis was intended to mitigate possible

tendencies towards the defensiveness within the juvenile justice system which often appears when disproportionality is discussed.

In addition to this DMC subcommittee, a DMC committee was established within the Los Angeles Probation Department with representatives from associations representing probation officers and correctional officers, e.g., Black Probation Officers' Association, Asian Pacific Probation Officers' Association, and the Mexican American Correctional Association. Interested staff and probation volunteers were invited to participate in this subcommittee, chaired by the project coordinator. Agendas focus on the progress of the DMC-TAP project and sharing data as it becomes available and assessing how the data can be used to improve operations. A predecessor committee that included staff from adult and juvenile probation had been established as part of a settlement agreement in a lawsuit filed against the Department, requiring that the Department examine the allocation of their resources to determine if that allocation was impacted in any way by race or ethnicity.

In Phase I, the Santa Cruz County Probation Department DMC-TAP elected not to assemble an advisory board but relied on regular communication with community organizations and alliances based on well established relationships for outreach regarding issues associated with disproportionality in the juvenile justice system. Prior experience with a broad advisory committee that was not interested in working intensely on DMC led Chief Cox to abandon the broad based advisory group model in favor of working internally and through contracts with organizations and community alliances for tailored services for juveniles.

The Santa Cruz County DMC-TAP project has used committees of Department employees to develop and test hypotheses, refine hypotheses, and make recommendations for system changes. Staff is actively recruited to participate in the work group and subcommittees. Five discrete subcommittees composed of line and administrative staffs were established in Phase I with specific mandates. The committees (data dictionary, RAI revision committee, core data development, data hardware, and training) were required to report back to the core working group and the policy group, quarterly. To recognize the importance of staff involvement in the project, employees were paid for their participation on these committees when meetings occurred on their days off. Committees are highly structured, minutes reflect specific assignments, and follow-up is stressed. All committees are provided access to probation data and encouraged to use data to inform their recommendations.

The Alameda County DMC-TAP did not elect to establish an advisory body in Phase I, but intends to reconvene the advisory group, previously established during the pilot project, in Phase II. The Alameda County DMC-TAP project focused on training all Department employees on the issues associated with DMC

nationally and in Alameda County. Based on the 2005 pilot project and the recommendations of the NCCD consultant, the project leadership determined that establishing a department-wide foundation of shared data was essential to Phases II and III.

As in Los Angeles County, the San Diego County DMC-TAP is linked with the countywide Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council through a DMC committee of the JJCC. This committee is composed of representatives from probation, the courts, law enforcement, juvenile justice and related public agencies. The subcommittee has been working on identifying and assessing disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system since 2000.

6. Developing, assessing and using data

The national experience is that a valid data driven picture of the functioning of a juvenile justice system is absolutely essential to making meaningful progress to reduce disproportionality. In Phase I, each DMC-TAP county focused on their management information system's capacity to produce relevant and accessible data.

The Alameda County DMC-TAP has benefitted from the data resources and analyses developed during the earlier pilot project grant. The Expert/Data Collection Team was able to produce high quality reports that examined several covariates. The data was sufficient for the calculation of the RRI and facilitated an exploration of differential detention time by ethnicity, sex, geography, age, and sustained petition severity and type.

Alameda County has recently overhauled its MIS updating necessary data collection fields. However, manual data collection and analysis will continue for the next two years until the PRISM system is fully implemented. During the intervening years, the manual collection, tracking and analysis of data will continue to be done by the project consultant.

In Contra Costa County, the existing management information system can provide for coordination and record sharing among probation, the courts, the DA's office, and the Public Defender. However, in Contra Costa there are limits on the case tracking of specific juveniles and on the ability to link ethnicity/race information to other information, such as economic status, offense, age, gender or other criteria which might impact DMC analyses. Contra Costa has been forced to use a complicated system for requesting and generating reports. That, and budgetary limitations, were impediments during Phase I in generating reports which could be used in outreach with stakeholders and for working with community alliances. The DMC-TAP project contracted for consultant assistance

to facilitate data aggregation and analysis. The data consultants were able to extract sufficient additional data to expand the data available for the cohort study beyond the three targeted communities and to produce a statistically valid report on disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system.

Contra Costa County is working on new MIS and case management systems. An integrated MIS system is anticipated in 2-3 years

The Los Angeles County DMC-TAP experience illustrates the challenges of capacity building in the absence of a cohesive management information system, with all of the necessary data elements. The Los Angeles County DMC-TAP collected data from eight different management information systems and data bases. For the purpose of Phase I, the DMC-TAP consultants analyzed detention data and used that data to focus recommendations for infrastructure changes, including revisions to the detention screening instrument.

A new case management system is being developed in Los Angeles, and DMC data collection requirements are being reviewed for incorporation in this system. The significant augmentation to come is the deployment of a new MIS that will allow an examination of patterns in a timely and comprehensive manner. The size of the effort is, by the nature of the Department and County, substantial.

During Phase I, the San Diego County DMC-TAP project focused its data analysis on two decision points: detention and institutional commitment. During the previous year the SANDAG research and evaluation unit had analyzed a sample of 1001 cases with sustained petitions according to five areas of interest (i.e., family, current offense, youth characteristics, prior delinquent behavior, and, adverse childhood experiences) and identified patterns. Arrest data for the Relative Rate Index (RRI) became available to the Probation Department during Phase I which allowed the updating of the RRI. The decision point analysis and the revised RRI were incorporated into DMC-TAP training and education outreach.

7. Training and education outreach

Staff training and outreach to local public and private leadership are both important to capacity building for meaningful change in the justice system. The initial focus of DMC-TAP has been on probation departments, which have significant and on-going contact with delinquent minors. Accordingly, each of the five DMC-TAP counties decided to train Probation Department employees on disproportionality through a structured curriculum that included pre and post training surveys. DMC-TAP also calls for building collaboration and consensus among stakeholders, in recognition of the fact that DMC reduction will call for the cooperation of multiple agencies. Although all sites worked with stakeholders

during Phase I, the San Diego County DMC-TAP was notable in its concentration on continued building of the political foundation for the DMC initiative by sharing the evolving research on disproportionality in the juvenile justice system with political and agency leadership at formal meetings and through individual briefings with the judiciary and other key decision makers.

In Phase I, the San Diego County DMC-TAP elected to focus on continuing to educate political and governmental policy makers, e.g., The Children's System of Care, the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Delinquency Policy Group, and the Police Chiefs Association. The educational outreach, conducted by the project coordinator from the Children's Initiative and the senior researcher from SANDAG included: explanation of the DMC-TAP and the core concepts; presentation of national data on disproportionate minority contact; and discussion of the local results of the ongoing research conducted by SANDAG. Also included in the presentations were recommendations regarding next steps linked to the County data. Over two hundred non-program personnel were trained during Phase I. Select Probation Department employees were trained during Phase I of DMC-TAP.

Three counties—Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Cruz--incorporated internal trainers in various capacities to deliver a structured DMC curriculum covering many of the same topics as the San Diego stakeholder training. Internal trainers, i.e., current employees of the Probation Department, were recognized as a way of adding more legitimacy to the training, improving the practical applicability of the training, and collecting feedback about the impact of the training on daily operations. Alameda, Contra Costa, and Santa Cruz Counties reported making modifications to the curriculum based on the input of the internal trainers.

All projects administered pre and post training surveys to their audiences to evaluate the effectiveness their curriculum and/or their presentations. Overall results from the surveys were positive, showing that trainees gained increased information about DMC nationally and locally and better understanding of their own impact on disproportionate minority contact within their juvenile justice systems.

The Alameda County Probation Department mandated that all Department employees and administration be trained during Phase I. Six hours of training were presented to juvenile probation officers, and fewer hours were presented to correctional counselors, administrative staff and adult probation officers. All employees received the core curriculum consisting of the history of the DMC Initiative, national research on DMC, and some core County data.

The Contra Costa County project began by training a segment of their supervisory, management and administrative staff, through a day-long training.

Department employees (7 supervisors and 1 line staff) were trained to teach the curriculum in conjunction with the expert consultant and subsequently trained ninety (90) line staff and probation officers.

Santa Cruz County integrated DMC training into their entire training curriculum for probation officers and staff, at all levels. Partnering Department staff as co-trainers with consultants from the Burns Institute improved the impact of the training, according to the participant surveys.

In Los Angeles County, the Burns Institute consultants took a different approach to introducing Probation Department employees to the DMC-TAP. The training was delivered to categories of institutional and program staff rather than generally to all probation officers. In addition to presenting the national experience with DMC initiatives and providing Los Angeles County-specific data, the training focused on probation department policies and procedures that directly impact disproportionate minority contact. Specifically, the trainings focused on entry into the juvenile justice system, i.e., on admission data, on the risk and screening tool used at intake, and on strategies used to reduce disproportionality in other jurisdictions.

Lessons Learned regarding Replicability

(1) Prior history with DMC issues made a difference. As a result of prior experience, Department leadership, stakeholders and staff in four counties had been exposed to DMC (one of the core requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act), and the operational strategies which were being used in other states and communities.

Only the Los Angeles County Probation Department had not engaged in a specifically targeted DMC effort at the time of application for the DMC-TAP grant. However, Los Angeles retained nationally known experts who could allocate staff time on and off site. With the assistance of this technical expertise, Los Angeles was able to make progress, particularly in the collection and analysis of data from the multiple separate data bases and to create a foundation for future data driven discussion on DMC issues related to probation department policy and procedures.

(2) Structuring DMC-TAP implementation as a three year demonstration has reinforced the DMC mission by acknowledging that reducing and eliminating disproportionality is complex and requires methodical work within probation and with stakeholders in the community. By focusing on data development, training and strengthening the data infrastructure, the five DMC-TAP counties were able to educate staff about the issue and reinforce the importance of their roles in the

Department wide initiative. The second and third year plan development and implementation will build from a strong foundation.

(3) Reaching the infrastructure of the juvenile justice system requires sufficient **dedicated** staff inside the Probation Department. DMC Coordinators located in the Probation Departments need to have sufficient time and support to maintain high visibility for the project. Both Los Angeles and Alameda DMC-TAP coordinators are very experienced and well regarded career professionals who were assigned this project in addition to an array of other responsibilities. Both coordinators would benefit from the assignment of some project support staff, similar to the approach in Santa Cruz, which assigned staff to assist the Coordinator. DMC projects require attention to a number of activities: training and follow up meetings, as needed, with trainees; communication of DMC activities and accomplishments; oversight and use of DMC-related data; coordination with stakeholders; and leading change efforts in the juvenile justice system.

(4) Sound data is essential to obtaining clarity and consensus about the extent and dimensions of disproportionality. Adequate data systems that collect information relevant to disproportionality are crucial. San Diego, for example, has taken advantage of an excellent information system to analyze RRI data, identify decision point priorities for DMC reduction, and build support among stakeholders.

The population and geography of Los Angeles County present a tremendous challenge in measuring progress, but the Burns Institute expert consultants were able to pull sufficient DMC-related data together to document suggested system improvement. In the long term, however, Los Angeles will need an MIS that can support on-going and timely data analysis.

The progress made by the Santa Cruz County project in methodically assessing data among and with staff has resulted in an engaged staff who question data, and understand how to use data, to assess how they perform their duties, and to adjust policies and practices accordingly. The Santa Cruz DMC-TAP experience illustrates that staff involvement is essential to “drilling down” into data and using data to inform policy and procedures.

Alameda and Contra Costa Counties have managed to generate usable data regarding DMC concerns, but both counties are working to strengthen their data capabilities by creating full MIS systems.

(5) How and where the Probation Departments located the DMC-TAP project within their basic mission and infrastructure was critical. The active involvement of the Department leadership, with clear and repeated statements that DMC

reduction is a core value of that agency, can help overcome the all too common cynical reaction from employees that DMC is “just another new project.”

For example, in attempting to capture and assess the importance of some of the more intangible features of the projects, we asked two linked questions: As of December 31, 2007, how well have the goals and principles of the DMC-TAP initiative been integrated into Probation Department practice? Has the capacity to implement a plan to reduce disproportionality been improved? In assessing this issue, we looked at leadership, project visibility and collateral influence.

The Contra Costa County Probation Chief took a strong public position on the importance of integrating DMC reduction as a goal into all Department policies, grant proposals, and solicitations for services. The Chief also carried the message to stakeholders and collaborative partners outside the Department. One of the key leaders in Contra Costa County, the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court, was among the earliest personal contacts made by the Probation Chief. Relying on already established working relationships with three community associations in data-identified target areas, the expert consultant and Department administrators invested time in sharing data on DMC with these groups and involving them also in the broader DMC initiative. Individual and group briefings were convened with community groups to discuss the dimensions of disproportionality in their own communities and the significance of the DMC-TAP project.

Although the coordinator in San Diego County was not a probation official, the probation chief and probation planning staff were actively involved, the San Diego project closely followed the work plan in the County's application and built on an established commitment to working on broad reform initiatives. The work plan focused on identifying the factors that contributed to the acknowledged disproportionality in the juvenile justice system and using this information to guide planning. Educating and training key staff and county leadership was designated as the second primary task. In conjunction with the senior analyst from SANDAG, the DMC-TAP coordinator (the Children's Initiative CEO) and her staff made regular presentations at meetings of juvenile justice stakeholders and county policy makers. In conjunction with individual briefings to County leadership, these presentations helped to focus the ongoing research on specific decision points and to connect data analysis to DMC-TAP Phase II and Phase III goals. As a result, San Diego was uniquely able to involve other justice agencies in the DMC effort.

Santa Cruz probation, like Contra Costa probation has had the benefit of an organizational size and structure which allowed the Probation Chief to be directly involved in DMC meetings and activities and, more generally, in publicizing their

support of the DMC project.¹ Although the Santa Cruz project maintained coordination with key community organizations, the Santa Cruz County DMC-TAP elected an entirely internal focus for Phase I based partially on the management philosophy that “Progress depends on changing the locus of control to empowering at the local level.”

Alameda County’s DMC-TAP leadership focused primarily on capacity building in Phase I primarily through their commitment to train all Probation Department employees. Almost the entire Department was trained in the initiative (92%). Post-training surveys reflected that the vast majority of the employees trained (75%) reported an increase in their knowledge about DMC in their work environment and the broader juvenile justice system as a result of the training. Opportunity for feed back to the trainers was provided that was integrated into subsequent training. For example, some employees characterized the disproportionality data as “old news,” that DNC was rooted in societal conditions beyond probation control, and expressed frustration with previous initiatives that had not been able to dislodge intransigent socio-economic conditions in specific neighborhoods, which they viewed as the cause of disproportionality. Using this feedback allowed the project to address the opportunities within probation to positively impact disproportionality.

Despite an abbreviated schedule and tremendous data challenges, the Burns Institute consultants to the Los Angeles County DMC-TAP, prepared a year end report that not only summarized core findings but made specific recommendations for infrastructure changes in Probation Department policy and procedure to support improved decision making regarding detention.

(6) Contracting with consultants with significant expertise with the issue of disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system can escalate capacity building. National leadership on this important issue has produced protocols, best practice models, and significant project experience. However, tailoring a strategy to the particular strengths and limitations of a particular jurisdiction in order to produce measurable and sustainable results requires specialized knowledge. Most Probation Departments have neither the personnel nor the time to develop this expertise.

The value of experienced consultants is seen in Los Angeles County which had a delayed start. By employing the Burns Institute, the Los Angeles County DMC-TAP made up for the months lost during the first half of the year. With the

¹ In smaller departments, it is possible for the Chief and/or the Project Coordinator to interact with all members of the department. In larger departments, activities such as training may need to be targeted to smaller groups, sequentially over time. This, for example, was the strategy in Los Angeles.

consultant help, Los Angeles achieved a data-driven foundation to aid decision-making during Phase II and Phase III and to identify concurrent modifications to daily practice within the Department.

The expert consultants with Alameda County and Contra Costa County have also been key, even essential, members of the DMC reduction teams in those counties, and the Burns Institute has been an active partner and resource for the DMC work in Santa Cruz County. San Diego County was, again, somewhat different in its approach. The Children's Initiative, SANDAG, and probation staff provided a strong base of local expertise.

Conclusions: Moving Ahead to Planning and Implementation (Phase II and Phase III)

The three year DMC-TAP format has provided the five counties with both the necessary initial focus and a realistic road map for making institutional changes. During Phase I, the five county DMC-TAP projects have strategically and diligently focused on increasing the capacity of their juvenile justice systems to reduce disproportionate minority contact. All of the projects report that through Phase I efforts, DMC within their juvenile justice systems has received more serious attention among County leadership inside and outside of the juvenile justice system.

However, work remains. For some of the counties, the absence of a county wide centralized data base that maintains data on juveniles throughout their experience in the juvenile justice system has been an obstacle to more rapid progress. For others, work with stakeholders has been largely postponed until Phase II. And for some, providing dedicated staff support for DMC reduction may become even more important as the projects mature in Phases II and III.

Despite such limitations, the DMC-TAP initiative has contributed to changes in policy (e.g., relating to detention recommendations), procedure (e.g., revising risk screening instruments), and in operations (e.g., criteria for recommending alternative programs) targeting disproportionality at specific decision points. The extent to which the goal of reducing or eliminating disproportionality is integrated into Probation Department infrastructure depends on the real and perceived commitment of the leadership at the top. Most counties have a solid foundation to reach out and involve more stakeholders more extensively in Phase II and to design a plan for implementation in Year III that will make major strides towards reducing and ultimately eliminating disproportionality in their juvenile justice systems.

The experience of the Phase I DMC-TAP projects does provide examples of excellence that other counties can look to. The San Diego information system

has proven to be extremely useful in shaping policy decisions. Alameda County has also been able to develop valuable data, even though a better MIS is still under development there. The techniques of agency leadership and staff involvement in the Santa Cruz Probation Department project have built an impressive level of commitment to DMC reduction in that department. Contra Costa County's DMC-TAP project provides a model for engaging community organizations as partners.²

The present report on capacity building implicitly posits that this capacity building will result on stronger DMC plans and alliances, which, in turn, will achieve actual DMC reduction. Those topics—the building of consensus with stakeholders and the DMC reduction strategies adopted—will be topics of future reports.

² The Phase I experience points, as one Coordinator suggested, to the utility of a “readiness for DMC” instrument to be used by counties considering a DMC reduction project and/or to funders. The instrument—or self-assessment—would operationalize the positive variables discussed in this report:

- the current data system's quality, completeness, and amenability to RRI analyses
- the level of prior DMC experience and/or expert consultant help available
- the extent of leadership commitment to DMC, both within Probation and within the juvenile justice system
- the standing and experience of the proposed Coordinator
- the willingness, and experience, of stakeholders to serve on DMC working committees
- the scope of staff resources available for the project